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Public Pulse

"Arrant Nonsense"

Editor of the Daily News.

The Columbia University speech of Allan Dulles, which you discussed on today's (June 13) editorial page, may have pinpointed a real weakness of the Soviet system. I should like, however, to call attention to the emotional implications of Mr. Dulles' argument, which we have certainly heard before in many forms.

Mr. Dulles suggests, by his observations, that the most disturbing problem of our generation—the threat of the police state—is not a problem at all. It is all going to be solved for us automatically by the operation of natural law, which has decreed that the most successful form of government is also the most pleasant, i.e., democracy. A dictatorship cannot compete with us in the rapid advance of science without destroying itself from within. Therefore we must always stay ahead of the Reds in military science, and we cannot lose.

I could compare this belief with the doctrine of "laissez faire," generally believed in the last century which proclaimed that everything would work out for the best if only nobody tried to do anything about it. But there are many later examples of wishful thinking much more pertinent to the threat of Red dictatorship. Surely no one who has worked in an editorial office for a decade or so has forgotten how we fooled ourselves about the threat of National Socialism before World War II. It was generally believed then that if a dictator trusted his armies with weapons there would come the revolution; obviously no dictator could really stand up to a democracy in a shooting war. This particular pipe-dream evaporated suddenly in early 1944, but others took its place—there has never been a lack of them. Surely the brainwashed Germans couldn't keep up with the free world in military inventions such as jet planes, tanks, poison gases, etc.

The whole history of dictatorship in Germany gives the lie to this kind of fatuous optimism. Before Hitler, the Germans had an international reputation for both their educational system and their technical advancement, yet the ability of German citizens to grind lenses, discover the causes of disease, invent rocket reaction engines, and excel in the chemical and medical

fields had very little to do with the resistance of German citizens to the monstrous doctrines of National Socialism.

To be sure, we can think up special reasons to account for the Germans. They were unfairly treated at Versailles, they had too big a war debt and an inflation, the education of Germans conditions them to accept authority, etc., etc. But if Allan Dulles' generalization has to use special excuses to account for failing in one out of the three or four existing examples of its application, it does not seem very convincing.

In short, I have seldom heard such arrant nonsense from a responsible public official. I can only suppose that Mr. Dulles, like the rest of us, is viewing the world by the rosy glow attending the dawn of a peaceful, friendly Soviet Russia for the first time since 1945. It is only natural to wonder if more important officials than Mr. Dulles—possibly even our Chief Executive—are shaping our policy in accordance with such roseate beliefs.

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